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# *The Arizona* **M.D. Update**

A Bi-Monthly Update of the Arizona Medical Digest

## **A Letter from the Executive Director**

Barry A. Cassidy, Ph.D., PA-C



The last two months have been extremely eventful and at times, both challenging and rewarding. With the support of the Board and my staff, the agency has withstood an extensive audit conducted by the Auditor General's Office.

While the audit brought forth many good suggestions for future refinements, I am pleased to announce that it also confirmed my original position that there was no malfeasance, mismanagement or failure to protect the public by either myself, the agency, or the Board. The allegations that originally spurred the need for an audit were serious and those allegations were rightfully acted upon by the Legislature.

Secondly, I am pleased to announce that the Arizona Medical Board has been rated 4th among all medical boards for discipline. As the article that follows will state, this is the fourth consecutive year

that the Board has placed within the top ten medical boards in the country. We are all extremely proud of the Board's accomplishments. A tremendous amount of hard work by the Board's investigative staff, as well as all ancillary staff, goes into thorough investigations that can withstand legal scrutiny. The Public Citizen Health Research Group will publish their own report later this week of medical board rankings by serious disciplinary actions. I am confident that the Board will again be recognized by Public Citizen for the efforts made to protect Arizona's citizens from the unlawful practice of medicine.

Finally, I would like to thank the numerous public advocacy and physician health groups that have publicly supported the Board throughout the years. Your many votes of confidence have made my transition to Executive Direc-

tor exciting and pleasurable. I look forward to continuing to serve you in the future.

## **MEDICAL BOARD RANKS 4TH**

The Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) released its annual ranking of medical boards this week and placed the Arizona Medical Board (Board) among its top disciplinarians. The Board's 4th place finish among all medical boards represents the total number of Board actions taken over the last calendar year, the same slot in which Arizona placed last year, and represents a top ten rating in the last four consecutive years. When compared to states with a populations similar to Arizona, the

## **BOARD MEETING DATES**

April 14-15, 2004

June 9-10, 2004

August 11-12, 2004

October 13-14, 2004

## INTERPRETING MAMMOGRAPHIC IMAGES—FAQ

Physicians often contact the Arizona Medical Board with questions regarding the training required by law to interpret mammographic images. A sample of some frequently asked questions and answers follows:

**Does Arizona have a law that addresses the requirements for a physician to interpret mammographic images?**

Arizona does have a statute, A.R.S. §32-2842, which became effective on January 1, 1994.

**Are there Federal laws addressing the requirements for a physician to interpret mammographic images?**

There are Federal requirements codified in law, 21 C.F.R. 900 *et seq.*

**Is the state law different than the Federal law?**

Yes. Federal law is more stringent than state law.

**Which law should an Arizona physician comply with when interpreting mammographic images?**

Physicians licensed in Arizona must comply with the Federal law because it is more stringent than the State law.

**Other than a license to practice medicine in Arizona, does a physician need a special license from the Board to read mammographic images in Arizona?**

No. A physician licensed to practice medicine in Arizona is only required to follow the standards set in the Federal law. Board approval to read mammographic images is not required.

For the full text of the Arizona law pertaining to mammographic images, log on to the Board's website at [www.azmdboard.org](http://www.azmdboard.org) and click on Statutes and Rules, then on AZ Revised Statutes for Health Professionals, then click on the hyperlinked statute.

For the full text of the Federal regulations, click on the United States Government Printing Office website at [www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html) and click on Code of Federal Regulations.

## SIGNING DEATH CERTIFICATES—It's Your Responsibility

The Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS), Office of Vital Records is responsible for the completion, disbursement and maintenance of death certificates. Death certificates are required before insurance proceeds are disseminated, probate proceedings are opened, and assets are sold or transferred. A delay in obtaining a death certificate can lead to anguish and financial hardship for surviving family members and business associates.

A death certificate cannot be filed for registration with DHS until it is signed. State law currently death certificates to be signed within 72 hours "by the physician in charge of the patient's care for the illness or condition resulting in death, except as may be provided by regulation for special situations or when death is subject to county medical examiner jurisdiction." (A.R.S. 36-327).

Physicians who fail to sign death certificates in a timely fashion are subject to disciplinary action by the Board. Arizona law states that it is unprofessional conduct for a physician to violate "any federal or state laws or rules and regulations applicable to the practice of medicine." (A.R.S. 32-1401(26)(a))

## MEDICAL BOARD RANKS 4TH

Board placed second.

State disciplinary rankings are based on a composite action index (CAI) score derived from a weighted average of Board prejudicial and non-prejudicial actions, based on the total number of licensed physicians and those physicians practicing in the state. Arizona had a CAI of 11.85, up from 10.98 points from last year.

“This ranking brings national attention to one of the Board’s most visible functions,” said Executive Director Barry A. Cassidy, Ph.D., P.A.-C. “Continual improvements in the Board’s investigative processes, adequate funding for Attorney General litigators, and support from the agency’s internal systems such as information technology, licensing, and business operations all contribute to the Board’s success.”

“Of greater importance to the public,” added Cassidy “is access to physician information, including Board actions.” The Board has been consistently recognized for the accessibility of its actions on its website, [www.azmdboard.org](http://www.azmdboard.org). In addition to a Recent Board Action page and individual physician profiles, the Board also offers a searchable database of physicians by specialty and location.

Additionally, the Board added an on-line complaint filing system this year that allows consumers to enter complaint information on-line and track the complaint through the various steps of the investigative process. The system is

the only one of its kind in the nation and it has quickly become a source of interest to other medical boards and Arizona State agencies. To date, over a tenth of all complaints received by the Board are received through this on-line process.

The FSMB report is one of two nationally publicized reports released annually. Results of the FSMB rankings are forwarded to the Public Citizen Health Research Group in Washington, D.C. Public Citizen will focus its study on “serious” disciplinary actions, such as license revocations, practice restrictions and probationary orders and issue its own set of disciplinary rankings later this week.

For more information on the Federation of State Medical Boards, go to [www.fsmb.org](http://www.fsmb.org) or contact Drew Carlson, Director of Communications at (817) 868-4043.

Federation of State Medical Boards	
Year	Ranking
2000	6th
2001	1st
2002	4th
2003	4th

**The Federation of State Medical Boards** is a national organization representing the 70 state medical boards of the United States and its territories. Acting on behalf of its membership, the Federation’s mission is to continually improve the quality, safety and integrity of health care in the United States through the development and promotion of high standards for physician licensure and practice.

## PHYSICIAN PROFILES—KEEP THEM UPDATED

Whether it's a change in your office practice location or retirement, all physicians holding an active license are obligated by law to inform the Board of their most current office addresses and phone numbers. Millions of consumers have come to rely on the information provided in a physician's public profile and the wrong address often means a patient's inability to track down important medical records such as a child's immunization history or past medical treatments.

The law requires physicians to inform the Board of this change within 30 days of the date of change. (A.R.S. 32-1435). Failure to comply with the law could result in a \$100 fine and/or disciplinary action. As a reminder, the Board routinely mails a copy of the physician profile along with the physician's biennial license renewal application. Physicians are encouraged to check the information provided in the profile and write the Board with any changes.

Keep in mind that addresses are not the only items to

check on the physician profile. Also look for and update any:

- Additional training such as residencies, internships or fellowships completed since initial licensure.
- Training completion dates if you completed a training program after initial licensure.
- Board actions. While the Board makes every attempt to verify that actions posted against a physician are accurate, it is a good idea to check.
- ABMS certifications obtained (or lapsed) since initial licensure.
- Practice areas of interest. Consumers can now search by physician specialties—make sure yours is included.

To view your current profile, visit the Board's website at [www.azmdboard.org](http://www.azmdboard.org).

## ARIZONA PODIATRISTS STEP UP TO DOCFINDER

The Arizona Board of Podiatry Examiners is the latest healthcare licensing board to join forces with DocFinder, a website resource that lists comprehensive healthcare provider information in one location.

Podiatrists are the eighth healthcare professional group to join the lists of licensed allopathic physicians (MDs), osteopathic physicians (DOs), naturopathic physicians (NMDs), dentists, optometrists and physician assistants.

DocFinder, located at <http://docfinder.state.az.us/>, was developed by the Arizona Medical Board and released to the public in May 2003. "These are all 90/10 agencies working in a collaborative effort to provide more information to the public," said Arizona Medical Board Executive Director Barry A. Cassidy, Ph.D., P.A.-C. "Arizonans have a right to this information," said Cassidy, "and as regulators, it is our responsibility to provide it to them in a meaningful and accessible fashion."

Prior to DocFinder, the only method to obtain podiatrist information was to call the Board of Podiatry Examiners or to view the file at the Board's office.

There are currently about 350 doctors of podiatric medicine licensed in Arizona. DocFinder will list the podiatry school the doctor attended, graduation date, license number and license issue and expiration dates, and whether there were any disciplinary actions taken. Contact information for the Board of Podiatry Examiners is also included to obtain more information about a specific podiatrist.